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NEWSBYTES

'Hometown' team hits road

KELLY AIR FORCE BASE, Texas (AFPN) — Army and Air Force Hometown News Service teams are circling the globe on their annual mission to record holiday greetings from overseas service members.

The teams will visit 58 overseas military installations on their 35-day mission. Their schedule is available at http://www.af.mil/news/Sep1999/n19990927_991782.html.

AFEM eligibility expands

RANDOLPH AIR FORCE BASE, Texas (AFPC) - The Joint Chiefs of Staff announced expansion of the area of eligibility for the award of the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal for Operation Northern Watch for the period of Jan. 1, 1997 through a date to be determined.

The area of eligibility now includes only the land area within Incirlik Air Base, Turkey; the total land area and air space of the countries of Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the portion of the Arabian Gulf (Persian Gulf) that's west of 56 degrees east longitude. Individuals must be assigned to ONW to qualify for the AFEM.

More information is available from local military personnel flights or the AFPC web page at www.afpc.randolph.af.mil.

AFOSI dedicates DOD lab

The Air Force Office of Special Investigations joined Defense Department officials in the opening of a new laboratory and training program Sept. 24. The AFOSI will oversee the DOD's Defense Computer Forensics Laboratory, and the Defense Computer Investigations Training Program.

The laboratory and training program establishes a cadre of specially trained computer crime investigators and a computer forensics laboratory that will support DOD's war on computer crime.

Military pay table reform

■ *Revision restores balance for promotion vs. longevity*

WASHINGTON — If signed by the President, the first significant change to the Department of Defense pay table since 1949 will reward promotion over longevity and put more dollars into the pockets of the majority of Air Force members, according to service officials.

The reform, which is included in the fiscal 2000 National Defense Authorization Act currently being considered by the Senate, stems from a fundamental review of the overall military compensation system by the 7th and 8th Quadrennial Reviews of Military
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The proposed pay reform targets mid-level officers and noncommissioned officers, like Senior Airman Christopher L. Bryer of Misawa Air Base, Japan (pictured here). The true benefits of pay table reform lie in the increased earnings over the span of their career as they get promoted and continue even into retirement.

■ **Quicker promotions mean more money for AF enlisted, Page 4**

OPERATION STABILISE

AF C-130s support U.N. efforts

By Staff Sgt. Christopher J. Haug
Pacific Air Forces News Service

HICKAM AIR FORCE BASE, Hawaii (PACAFNS) — More than a week into Operation Stabilise, three Air Force C-130s have flown 26 sorties into Indonesia carrying more than 313 people and 524,000 pounds of supplies.

The Air Force has deployed about 110 people to the Australian-led U.N. peacekeeping operation supporting refugees in East and

West Timor. Ninety-four Air Force members are from five PACAF bases — Hickam; Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska; Andersen Air Force Base, Guam; Yokota Air Base, Japan; and Kadena Air Base, Japan.

Airmen deploying into the East Timor area, an island seeking independence from Indonesia, are part of a U.S. Pacific Command deployment package that includes communications, intelligence, logistics, planning, medical,

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YOUR MONEY

Letters to the editor

U.S. Air Force Online News publishes letters based on their appeal to an Air Force-wide audience each week.

Send your letter to the U.S. Air Force Online News staff by completing the online form at <http://www.af.mil/newspaper/>. Due to the number of letters, not all letters can be published. Letters may be edited for grammar and length. Only letters accompanied by a valid name and email address will be considered.

It's a way of life!

... With the announcement of the pay table reform, many military members are complaining about inequities or problems they see in the process. What I can't understand is that many of these same people are re-enlisting or retiring from the military. ... If it's so bad for them, I suggest they hurry and get out. ... I don't think any of us came into the military to become rich. If so, you're in the wrong business. Our leaders are making tremendous efforts to improve our quality of life. ...

Tech. Sgt. Mark Stephens
Sheppard AFB, Texas

Don't appreciate doublespeak

... senior Air Force leaders say there is in fact no pay inequity between officers and enlisted people. It's just a "perceived" inequity. Frankly, what I perceive is doublespeak. When a master sergeant with 22 years service earns less base pay than a first lieutenant with three years service, that is a bona-fide, undeniable, unjustifiable, pay inequity. There are many other comparisons to be made ... anybody can see the inequity. ...

David M. Lusignolo
Sheppard AFB, Texas

Straight talk about pay table reform

By Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Jim Finch

All of the attention pay table reform has received recently has opened the door for considerable confusion on just what pay table reform is and is not intended to accomplish. I want to share some thoughts in hopes of providing a better understanding of the proposed pay and compensation package.

The fiscal 2000 National Defense Authorization Act, which awaits the president's signature to become law, has a number of positive pay and compensation initiatives for the military. These include a 4.8 percent pay raise — the highest we have received in 18 years — repeal of the "Redux" retirement system to one that provides a 50 percent retirement at 20 years service; future annual pay raises at 0.5 percent above the economic cost indicator for the next six years; and authorization for a first-duty station temporary lodging expense, something we have sought for quite some time.

Also included is an adjustment to the military pay table — a pay table reform initiative the Department of Defense recommended to correct long-standing problems within the table itself.

It is this single aspect of current pay and compensation initiatives that has been a topic of discussion among many Air Force members — discussion fueled by the misperception of what pay table reform is and is not intended to accomplish.

After meeting with Air Force and DOD compensation experts, this is what I have learned about pay table reform: The purpose of this pay reform is to make a one-time correction in certain cells of the pay table that have gotten "out of sync" over the years with the intent to emphasize and reward performance (promotion) over longevity throughout the table.

This is why some pay cells with larger anomalies will require respectively larger corrections to fix the overall table. However, the bottom line is everyone benefits from this reform when viewed from a whole-career perspective rather than by looking at only one pay table cell. You must look beyond today and focus on the increased earnings you will obtain throughout your career and into retirement.

Let me cover some of the areas that I think have caused some concern.

Since staff sergeants at seven years service (about the average pin-on time in the Air Force) received one of the smallest adjustments to the table, one might question the assertion that pay table reform focused on mid-level NCOs. I found part of the answer to this rests with the definition of "mid-level." We in the Air Force lag behind our sister services in average promotion pin-on time to the mid-level NCO grades (e.g., the average promotion to E-5 in the Army is just over 4 years service). Keep in mind that pay table reform is a DOD initiative applying equally to all the services. Therefore, it's a fact that Air Force members won't benefit from pay table reform quite as much as our sister service counterparts. However, this is more of an Air Force promotion problem than a DOD pay table reform concern, and we are working to improve this situation.

In fact, we've just received authorization to increase the percentage of the Air Force enlisted force allowed to serve in the top five grades from about 48 percent today to 56 percent by 2003. This should ultimately allow us to shorten the time it takes to promote our mid-level NCOs and, therefore, increase the benefit of pay table reform.

Another misperception I've heard recently is that pay table reform was intended to significantly increase basic pay levels of our NCOs, especially at the senior NCO level. Although I'm told this was not the intention of this reform, I agree there is still much more work to be done in this area considering the education levels, expectations and responsibilities of an all-volunteer, professional NCO corps. You are the best and brightest people our country has to offer, and you're the envy of virtually all the world's militaries. I assure you I will continue to push for increased compensation to better recognize the many contributions you as dedicated professionals give to our nation.

We have much to look forward to in the coming months. We're slated to receive the largest pay raise since 1982, an improvement to our retirement system, projected pay raises for the next six years that will outpace inflation and begin to close the pay gap, and a reform of our pay table that will further increase lifetime earnings.

With these initiatives, and others I haven't mentioned, the President, Congress and the American people are sending us a strong message of thanks and support. Let me also take this opportunity to thank you for what you do every day for our Air Force — I'm proud to serve along side you.



OPERATION STABILISE

AF C-130s support U.N. efforts

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aircrew and other support personnel.

The Operation Stabilise U.N. force, called the International Peacekeeping Force in East Timor or INTERFET, is charged with imposing order in East Timor after weeks of bloodshed and paving the way for the territory's independence from Indonesia.

U.S. Marine Corps Brig. Gen. John Castellaw is in charge of the PACOM team, which is supporting a U.N. multinational force.

"Australia deserves a great deal of credit for taking the lead on this,"

said Defense Secretary William S. Cohen prior to departing for Australia this week. "We will provide the lessons that we have learned from our own peacekeeping missions," including how to deal with displaced persons and logistical problems.

"This is a very strong relationship we



Photo by Master Sgt. Val Gempis

Staff Sergeant Greg Seeger, 18th Transportation Squadron, Kadena Air Base, Japan, and Staff Sergeant Wayne Small, 10th Transport and Movement Company, Royal New Zealand Army Logistics Regional, discuss procedures for loading an Australian military vehicle onto a U.S. Air Force C-130 Hercules at Darwin Royal Australian AFB.

ties against pro-democracy factions, which have included disappearances and shootings, are unacceptable. The United States will do all it can to help make democracy work in East Timor, he said. (Portions of this story were reprinted from an American Forces Press Service story.)

have," Secretary Cohen said. "We look to the Australians as key, strategic partners."

Pro-Indonesia militias rejected East Timor's vote for independence on Aug. 30 and began burning buildings, looting and killing people with the help of Indonesian security forces.

The province is struggling to establish an independent democracy that is backed by the United Nations but has received mixed support from Indonesia itself. Secretary Cohen said Indonesian military activi-

Military pay table reform

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Compensation. The QRMCs addressed whether the current pay table provided an adequate framework to attract and retain high quality men and women through the 1990s and beyond. Based on this review, the proposed July 1 pay table reform was primarily recommended to:

- Make pay increases for promotions more meaningful, successively more valuable and greater than corresponding longevity increases.

- Provide uniform and consistent longevity raises.

Consequently, pay table reform targets specific pay grades with varying percentage pay increases to overcome the gap between promotion and longevity. This increase is in addition to the proposed 4.8 percent across-the-board pay raise all military members receive Jan. 1.

To fully appreciate the value of pay table reform, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Michael E. Ryan said "you have to look at it for what it is — a one-time modification to the pay table."

He emphasized a key consideration was to ensure no one lost money because of the reform. Ultimately, more than three-quarters of the enlisted force and half of the officer corps will see some level of pay increase under the reform.

"If you compare the number of Air Force members assigned to each grade and by years of service," General Ryan said, "the combined 4.8 percent pay raise and pay table reform generate an average pay increase of 6.21 percent for enlisted members and 6.17 percent for officers."

He said for those who may not see a big increase July 1, the true benefits of pay table reform lie in the increased earnings over the span of their career as they get promoted and continue even into retirement. "Benefits," he said, "that will ultimately add up to thousands of additional dollars."

The reform targets mid-level officers and noncommissioned officers across the DOD. However, some Air Force NCOs will not see the maximum pay boost the reform offers because of differing enlisted promotion rates among the services.

This article is available in its entirety online.

Speak today, shape tomorrow

All Air Force active-duty and civilian workers will have the opportunity to let Air Force leaders know how they feel about their quality of life and work environment by completing the Chief of Staff of the Air Force survey available online Sept. 30 through Oct. 29.

The survey measures organizational climate and quality of life around the Air Force, ranging from the headquarters level down to the individual unit level. It is designed to provide commanders, first sergeants, command chief master sergeants and senior civilian leaders at all levels the feedback necessary to improve areas over which they have direct impact.

Commenting on improving quality of life and work for airmen, Secretary of the Air Force F. Whitten Peters said, "We are trying to make people's lives better, and provide the tools

they need. They deserve a first-class place to work. We're committed to getting down to the fundamentals of the Air Force."

The online survey, which is completely voluntary and totally anonymous, consists of approximately 127 questions covering Air Force QOL and OC, and includes major command-specific questions for people assigned to specific MAJCOMs. Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Michael E. Ryan said, "I want to thank you in advance for participating in my 1999 CSAF Survey. This is a great opportunity to provide direct feedback about how we're doing in a variety of 'people programs.' To sustain the world's preeminent aerospace force, we must ensure excellence in living standards and in the work environment for our personnel."

This article is available in its entirety online.



Faster promotions, more money

■ Top five enlisted take home larger paychecks

WASHINGTON — A change in the enlisted force structure is putting more money in the pockets of the Air Force's top five enlisted grades sooner, according to personnel officials.

Increasing the percentage of active-duty enlisted in the top five grades will increase promotion opportunities at the same time it reduces sew-on times. "This translates into bigger and faster raises," said Maj. Gen. Susan L. Pamerleau, director, personnel force management, deputy chief of staff, personnel, Air Force headquarters.

By 2003, the number of active-duty enlisted in the top five grades will rise from 48.5 to 56 percent. General Pamerleau said the increase is necessary because of a growing need for a more senior and experienced noncommissioned officer corps.

"We've come to this realization as we stabilize with a smaller team, transition to an Expeditionary Aerospace Force, and increase our competitive source and privatization efforts," she said.

In regard to timing and opportunity, the general called promotion planning the key element in the Total Objective Plan for Career Airmen Personnel, which carries out the service's enlisted force management dictates.

Working toward such a force mix, personnel officials have laid the foundation to increase the percentages in the top five enlisted grades.

During the drawdown, the Air Force used TOPCAP's minimum promotion rates to avoid overproducing NCOs. Today's more stable end strengths, combined with a richer top five-grade mix, allows the service to raise enlisted promotion opportunities.

General Pamerleau said the Air Force's enlisted force management objectives are clear:

- meet commanders' needs with the appropriate balance of experience and skill;
- provide reasonable career progression

opportunity; and

- maintain a self-sustaining, vigorous force with a stable, career force;

To achieve these goals, Air Force personnel officials are taking a three-pronged approach.

"First, we have dramatically increased promotion opportunities," General Pamerleau said.

For example, in 1995, the promotion rate for staff sergeant promotions was 16.6 percent of eligibles; for the 1999 promotion cycle, it was 36.3 percent — the highest ever seen under the Weighted Airman Promotion System.

Second, personnel officials have changed the TOPCAP enlisted force structure from no more than 48.5 percent of active-duty enlisted in the top five grades to 52 percent in fiscal 2000 and increasing to 56 percent by FY03.

"These combined actions will result in our third prong, reducing the sew-on time for staff sergeants from 7.6 years in 1995 to 6.8 years this year, and moving down to 6.1 years by 2003," she said.

This means the average airman will sew on E-5 18 months sooner than they previously would have. "That's 18 months of additional promotion pay than before," General Pamerleau said.

Similarly, for technical sergeant, the promotion rate was 11.2 percent in 1995; currently it is 24 percent; with sew-on time projected to decrease from 14.1 years last year to 12.8 years by 2003.

Based on Air Force needs and the increase of the top five grades to 52 percent, promotion rates are projected to increase again in FY00, the general said.

General Pamerleau believes this more robust top five structure does a lot for the Air Force and its enlisted corps. It provides commanders the resources necessary to operate in tomorrow's EAF environment and it is good news for enlisted members.

This article is available in its entirety online.

ACC reconstitution efforts underway

By Capt. Wilson Camelo

Air Combat Command Public Affairs

LANGLEY AIR FORCE BASE, Va.

(ACCNS) — As Air Combat Command readies for the Expeditionary Aerospace Force start up Oct. 1, the command is on track toward reconstituting its forces that experienced higher-than-normal operations tempo during Operation Allied Force and other recent deployments, according to officials here.

Reconstitution is the process to restore people, aircraft and equipment to the high states of readiness the country depends on following a period of higher-than-normal, or surge, operations.

"We are three months into the reconstitution period and units that needed time to recover have made significant progress," said Maj. Gen. David MacGhee, director of ACC's Aerospace Operations. "All units in our reconstitution plan are on track and will be back to full combat capability at or before the end of their designated reconstitution period."

ACC's reconstitution plan gives 10 fighter and bomber squadrons, and 16 low density/high demand units time that's needed to work off the backlog in training and deferred maintenance as well as restock spare parts. It also gives people a chance to get their lives back in order personally and professionally following their extended deployments. In addition, the command coordinated closely with units to determine their capability to support training exercises such as Red Flag.

The actual recovery time varies by unit and is based on how heavily they were tasked during this period but reconstitution will be complete by March, General MacGhee said.

This article is available in its entirety online.



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